Stay with Me

A Short Audiobook By Roger E Bissell Jr

It was a perfect morning. Birds sang beneath a misty blue sky. Karl woke in confusion, unable to shake a deep unease. The fireplace burned without warmth. When he asked Amanda—his beautiful, devoted partner—why, she only smiled. “It’s always the same temperature here.”

Breakfast appeared on the table the moment he wished for it. Amanda laughed at his surprise. “Where else would it come from?” They walked through sunlit city streets, shared ice cream sundaes, and lived the kind of flawless days most people only dream of. Karl was young and strong again, a successful model on endless vacation with the woman he adored. Yet something felt wrong. Glitches appeared: a flicker of hospital beeps, a woman’s desperate voice whispering, “Please, Karl... come back to us.”

In the real world, Joyce Bachlord sat beside her husband’s hospital bed, tears falling as machines kept Karl alive. Weeks had passed since the accident. A construction worker, Karl had run up a burning building’s fire escape to save a little girl. The explosion threw him down. Now he lay motionless. Their sons—twelve-year-old Robert, exhausted with dark circles under his eyes, and energetic little Patrick—missed their father terribly. Joyce was desperate.

Her friend Laura brought in Jessica, a spiritual guide and medium. Jessica’s sister, she explained, was somehow connected to Karl’s coma. Skeptical but heartbroken, Joyce finally agreed to let Robert try to reach his father through Jessica’s guidance.

That night, in the candlelit room thick with sage smoke, Jessica held Robert’s hands. “Your father is trapped in a beautiful but dangerous dream. Go to him.”

In the dream, the perfect world fractured. Karl stood on a city street when a boy appeared. “Dad?” Robert said, voice cracking. He told Karl the truth: he was Karl Bachlord, a husband and father in a coma. Amanda wasn’t real—she was Sarah, a woman who had once entered dreams to comfort the dying and never left. She created paradise for lost souls so she wouldn’t be alone. Their bodies eventually died while they slept forever.

Amanda—Sarah—appeared, radiant yet desperate. She begged Karl to stay. “I gave you everything. Youth. Strength. A love without pain. Stay with me.” She revealed her own pain: she had been trapped in this realm for years, creating perfect lives for others while fearing solitude.

Karl’s mind tore between two realities. Flashes of his true life flooded him—Joyce’s weary smile, Patrick’s laughter, Robert’s proud face when they worked

together, the terrifying moment he chose to save the little girl. Robert pleaded, reminding him of their family's love and the special song Joyce played at his bedside.

The dream world crumbled. Buildings dissolved into hospital walls. The ocean waves faded beneath the steady beep of monitors.

Sarah's eyes filled with tears. "Don't leave me alone again."

Karl looked at her with compassion. "You gave me a beautiful dream, Sarah. But my real life—the messy, painful, wonderful one—is waiting. I'm a husband. I'm a father. I have to go back."

He kissed her forehead gently, then turned to Robert. "Tell your mom I'm coming home."

A blinding light engulfed everything.

In the hospital, Karl's fingers twitched. His eyes opened to Joyce's tear-streaked, loving face. "Joyce... I'm sorry I took so long."

Six months later, the Bachlord backyard rang with laughter. Karl, still rebuilding strength with a cane nearby, splashed with his sons in the pool. Joyce leaned against him, the simple weight of her husband a miracle. Robert no longer carried dark circles. Patrick squealed with joy.

Karl sometimes remembered the dream's distant ocean waves, but he always chose the sound of his wife breathing beside him and his sons' real, imperfect laughter echoing through the house.

He had made the right choice.

The End

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Stay or Go [4:19]

[Verse 1]
Birds sang through the blue
Fire burned cold
Amanda smiled like glass
And breakfast just showed

Sun on the avenue
Ice cream in hand
Young again, strong again
A perfect dreamland

[Pre-Chorus]
But the air felt wrong
Like a door left open

A flicker in the wall
And my chest felt broken

A voice through the static
Soft and so afraid
Please, Karl, come back
Please come back today

[Chorus]
Decide
Stay or go
Stay in the dream
Or face what I know
Decide
Stay or go
Perfect life
Or the truth below

(Stay or go)
(Stay or go)

[Verse 2]
Robert took my hands
Eyes too old for twelve
Patrick missed my laugh
Joyce was holding herself

Jessica lit the room
Sage and candle smoke
Then my boy said my name
And the whole dream broke

[Pre-Chorus]
I saw the bed
I saw the tubes
I saw my wife
And the fear she moved through

I saw the fire
I saw the leap
I chose that child
And then I fell deep

[Chorus]
Decide
Stay or go
Stay in the dream
Or face what I know
Decide
Stay or go
Perfect life
Or the truth below

(Stay or go)
(Stay or go)

[Bridge]
Amanda reached for me
With her perfect light
Youth in her palm
And no end in sight

But Robert said
Dad, don't let go
Mom's by your side
And she needs you home

Joyce at my bed
That song she played
Her tired brave love
Would not fade away

[Final Chorus]
Decide
Stay or go
I choose the bed
I choose the road
Decide
Stay or go
Tell my mom
I'm coming home

(Stay or go)
(Coming home)
(Stay or go)
(Coming home)

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